

THE NEW TEMPLE



FROM THE PSALMS

“The LORD is in his holy temple; the LORD's throne is in heaven; his eyes see, his eyelids test the children of man.”

—Psalm 11:4

FROM THE WRITINGS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

“Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.”

—Revelation 22:1–2

FROM THE *CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH*

“The worship ‘in Spirit and in truth’ of the New Covenant is not tied exclusively to any one place. The whole earth is sacred and entrusted to the children of men. What matters above all is that, when the faithful assemble in the same place, they are the ‘living stones,’ gathered to be ‘built into a spiritual house.’ For the Body of the risen Christ is the spiritual temple from which the source of living water springs forth: incorporated into Christ by the Holy Spirit, ‘we are the temple of the living God.’”

—CCC, 1179

THE NEW TEMPLE

INTRODUCTION

The kingdom of Israel is scattered and the Temple is destroyed. It seems that all hope is lost. The Temple had represented God's dwelling among his people. It had been a place to offer sacrifices so the Israelites could be forgiven of their sins. God does not leave his people in despair; he promises there will be a new Temple. How is this promise fulfilled by Christ's death on the Cross? We will find out after we pray.

OPENING PRAYER:

Lord, open my mind to your word and bless me with the gift of understanding so I might come to know and love you better. Amen.

BACKGROUND

God's people had abused and disrespected the holiness of the Temple. God, therefore, had allowed it to be destroyed as a just consequence of their sin. Now, the Lord consoles them with hope of a new place of worship. In this passage, God shows the prophet Ezekiel a vision of a new Temple.

SCRIPTURE

Read Ezekiel 47:1–12

COMMENTARY

A few chapters before our passage (Ezekiel 40:5-19), Ezekiel describes the measurements of this new Temple and its outer courts. It is much bigger than Solomon's Temple--so much so that it would have not even fit on the mountain where the original Temple stood.⁵ The glory of the new Temple surpasses all Israel's hopes.

Ezekiel describes how life-giving water flows from the altar of this new Temple. This water is supernatural: it causes trees to bear fruit year-round and it causes salt water to become fresh. Fishermen gather around this stream of water and catch an abundant supply of fish. The Temple and the living water that flows from it gives God's people extraordinary hope for the future.

FULFILLMENT IN CHRIST

In the Gospel of John, a crowd gathers around Jesus on the Feast of Tabernacles—a Jewish feast celebrating the dedication of the Temple. The Jewish people celebrate this feast by reading from Ezekiel 47, our passage from today which describes life-giving water flowing from the Temple. On this occasion, Jesus tells the crowds, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’” (John 7:37–38). Jesus describes himself as the new Temple, the source of living water.

On the Cross, a soldier pierces Jesus side with a spear and blood and water flow out at once (John 19:34). Jesus is the true Temple, the source of life-giving water. Jesus offers himself out of love for the Father and love for the human race. His heart—the source of his love—is the altar of this most perfect sacrifice.

IN THE LITURGY

The new Temple of Ezekiel's vision is a building of other-worldly proportions. The true Temple is Jesus' body. After Jesus' Resurrection and Ascension, Jesus' body is present on earth through the Church. The Church extends beyond earthly measurements, and brings the life-giving water of God's grace to all nations through the sacraments.

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, fill me with your love and pour this living water into my heart. May my heart, filled with your grace, be a source of living water for others. Amen.

RESOLUTION

Look at your hands, your arms, your legs. This is the body God will raise and glorify in heaven. Thank God for your body and show him you love this gift by taking care of your body.

⁵ For more information, please see *A Catholic Introduction to the Bible Vol. 1: The Old Testament* by John Bergsma and Brant Pitre, page 852)

THE NEW EXODUS



FROM THE PSALMS

“Save us, O LORD our God,
and gather us from among
the nations, that we may
give thanks to your holy
name and glory in your
praise.”

—Psalm 106:47

FROM THE WRITINGS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

“And they sing the song of
Moses, the servant of God,
and the song of the Lamb,
saying, ‘Great and amazing
are your deeds, O Lord God
the Almighty! Just and true
are your ways, O King of the
nations! Who will not fear, O
Lord, and glorify your name?
For you alone are holy. All
nations will come and
worship you, for your
righteous acts have been
revealed.’”

—Revelation 15:3–4

FROM THE *CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH*

“In his preaching the Lord
Jesus often makes use of the
signs of creation to make
known the mysteries of the
Kingdom of God. He
performs healings and
illustrates his preaching with
physical signs or symbolic
gestures. He gives new
meaning to the deeds and
signs of the Old Covenant,
above all to the Exodus and
the Passover, for he himself
is the meaning of all these
signs.”

—CCC, 1151

THE NEW EXODUS

INTRODUCTION

In addition to the promise of a new Temple, God promises to restore his Kingdom. What sin had scattered, God will gather together. This work of pulling his people together reminds us of something we have already learned about: the Exodus. Today, we will learn how Jesus' death on the Cross is the new Passover sacrifice of the New Exodus.

OPENING PRAYER:

Lord, open my mind to your word and bless me with the gift of understanding so I might come to know and love you better. Amen.

BACKGROUND

The kingdom of Israel had been scattered over a period of hundreds of years. The powerful nation of Assyria had conquered the ten northernmost of the twelve tribes (known as Israel) and forced them to scatter throughout the Assyrian empire. This strategy of dispersing the conquered peoples prevented them from banding together and forming an uprising. The ten tribes are scattered so thoroughly by the Assyrians that they are known as the "Lost Ten Tribes of Israel." When the nation of Babylon conquers the two remaining southern tribes (known as Judah), it allows them to encamp together in Babylon. After a time, the southern two tribes return to the Promised Land, but the northern tribes (Israel) remain lost. In our scripture passage, God assures even the northern lost tribes that he will restore their fortunes too.

SCRIPTURE

Read Jeremiah 16:14–16; Isaiah 43:16–25

COMMENTARY

God promises *Israel*—those who are scattered in the north country—a dramatic rescue that will be even greater than the Exodus from Egypt. The re-gathering of Israel will be the crowning achievement of God's saving work. Israel became scattered by sin, but God will gather them through his forgiveness. This forgiveness will come from fishermen whom God will send to catch his people. The prophet Isaiah also

speaks to Israel of a New Exodus. God promises a new passage through water and a new way through the wilderness. His people were separated from by sin. He will make *a way out* (an Exodus) by his forgiveness.

FULFILLMENT IN CHRIST

Jesus' life echoes many aspects of the original Exodus story. He is like Moses, born under the persecution of a ruthless king who wants to take the life of Hebrew boys. He finds safety in Egypt, he gives the Law from a mountain, and he provides his people with supernatural food and drink. Jesus, the new Moses, prepares us to see his ministry as a new Exodus.

Jesus, as Jeremiah promises, sends fishermen to be "fishers of men" and catch the lost members of the tribes of Israel (Matthew 10:6). Jesus gives us baptism—a new passing through the Red Sea—to free us from slavery to sin. The original Exodus resulted from the death of the Passover Lamb. In the Gospels, Jesus is the true Passover Lamb. He sheds his blood and gives us his flesh to eat so our sins can be forgiven.

IN THE LITURGY

Jesus gathers the lost sheep of Israel through the Church in the sacraments. The apostles and their successors are sent to baptize all nations because Israel has been scattered to all nations. The mission of the Church is to make disciples of the whole world so that all nations—including those Lost Ten Tribes—are gathered together to worship Christ their King.

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, you keep all your promises. You promised David an everlasting kingdom. Even when sin scatters and divides, you lay down your life to bring your people together. Thank you, Lord. Amen.

RESOLUTION

Sin scatters and divides. Find something that is scattered about in your home: your toys, your clothes, your schoolwork. Gather it together in imitation of God who gathers his people.

THE NEW CREATION



FROM THE PSALMS

“When you send forth your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the ground.”

—Psalm 104:30

FROM THE WRITINGS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”

—2 Corinthians 5:17

FROM THE *CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH*

“Our Lord voluntarily submitted himself to the baptism of St. John, intended for sinners, in order to ‘fulfill all righteousness.’ Jesus’ gesture is a manifestation of his self-emptying. The Spirit who had hovered over the waters of the first creation descended then on the Christ as a prelude of the new creation, and the Father revealed Jesus as his ‘beloved Son.’”

—CCC, 1224

THE NEW CREATION

INTRODUCTION

Through the prophets, God promises a new Temple and a restored kingdom for Israel. But God's saving work is not limited to the people of Israel. Today, we will learn how God renews all creation through Christ. God will re-create the earth, healing it from the effects of sin once and for all. The old creation will die and give way to a new creation. As we will see, Jesus is the seed of this new creation.

OPENING PRAYER:

Lord, open my mind to your word and bless me with the gift of understanding so I might come to know and love you better. Amen.

BACKGROUND

When Adam and Eve sinned, every part of the physical world shared in their downfall. In Genesis 1:26, God gives man "dominion" over all the animals. The fate of the material world is wrapped up in the fate of Adam and Eve. Prior to their sin, there was no death; after their sin, animals kill each other for food and are afraid of humans. In today's set of readings, God promises a renewal for all creatures—both animal and man.

SCRIPTURE

Read Isaiah 65:17–25 and Jeremiah 31:10–12

COMMENTARY

Through the prophet Isaiah, God promises a new heaven and a new earth. There will be neither predator nor prey in this new creation; all will live in harmony. The effects of sin will be healed and every part of creation will be at peace.

The passage from Jeremiah likewise offers hope of restoring the joy of the Garden of Eden. The Lord promises his people will be like a "watered garden." God will plant a new seed on the earth, the "seed of man and the seed of beast" (Jer. 31:27). The tranquility and fullness of life once enjoyed by God's

creatures in the garden will be enjoyed once again in this new creation.

FULFILLMENT IN CHRIST

Jesus ushers in this new creation. Saint John begins his Gospel with the words "In the beginning"—the same opening words as the book of Genesis. God has the power to re-create the world because he is its original creator. Through Christ, God is doing something *new*.

This new creation does not come without cost, however. Before the new creation can take root, the old creation must pass away. Jesus explains, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit" (John 12: 23–24). Jesus is glorified on the cross. He is the grain of wheat who dies. His body is the seed which, when buried, bears fruit beyond measure. After his death and burial, he rises to glory, bringing about salvation of all the world. He is the firstborn of the new creation.

IN THE LITURGY

God also renews creation through the sacraments. The material objects of water, oil, bread, and wine become the means of new life. Water communicates grace; oil provides supernatural strength; bread and wine, when changed into Jesus's Body and Blood, provide us with supernatural food for our bodies born again through baptism.

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, my new life begins in baptism and increases when I receive the sacraments. When I doubt that I can be good, help me know that I am a new creation because of your grace. Amen.

RESOLUTION

In the new creation, we will not fight with anyone. We will all be at peace. Make an extra effort today to be a peacemaker in your family to celebrate the new creation that is alive in you.